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## PROBLEMS MET IN REORGANIZING A HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY

BY MARY HELEN POOLEY, *Librarian Hughes High School, Cincinnati*

No branch of school activity portrays more vividly the change in educational ideas than the modern high school. It has grown phenomenally in the past fifteen years; the enrollment has almost doubled since 1900. Courses of study have been revolutionized; gardening, printing, millinery, arts and crafts are side by side with English, Latin and mathematics. With the development of these industrial, technical subjects have come wonderful new buildings, costly equipment and corps of trained specialists. Pedagogical methods are constantly changing; the classroom is becoming vitalized, a new spirit is at work. The high school is no longer merely a preparatory school for the few who go to college. The proportion of children who pass from the grades into the high school increases every year. The American public has learned that the high school is now a training school in which young people may find opportunities to develop along different lines and prepare themselves for active participation in the civic and social life of the community.

That the library, the people's university, should have failed to take a prominent place in a democratic educational scheme of this kind seems hardly possible. Yet the instances are only too few where the library in its equipment and directing force is equal to the laboratory, the shop and gymnasium. Why has the growth of the library been retarded in this way? In the first place the whole library movement, in its modern scientific aspects, is more recent than that of the school. Educating the public as to the real place and function of the library in the community has been slow work and educating the school authorities and teachers as to the corresponding place of the library in the life of the school seems to be still slower work. Then, too, the high school library, like the public library, has suffered and still suffers from

lack of advertising. It is only within very recent years that discussions of the high school library have crept into the educational journals; and outside of library circles the high school library receives scant attention and almost no serious consideration. Only last year in a small Kentucky city a beautiful new high school building was erected with absolutely no provision for a library. Why should educators fully alive to modern tendencies and even fads, be so strangely blind about the library? The librarian who undertakes to reorganize a school library must face these facts. The school world into which she is entering, pleasant as it may be, is not the library world. The library is indeed the "retarded child" in the educational family, and we are its guides and teachers.

Of course the high school libraries in need of reorganization will be found in various states of development according to local progress and conditions. Let us suppose our librarian has been recently appointed in a large city high school. If it is a city and school large enough to require the services of a full-time trained librarian the school may be somewhat of this type: A beautiful, perfectly equipped building, modern in every detail, with courses of study including everything from Greek to gardening, 1,500 to 2,000 pupils, 100 teachers, all sorts of clubs and student activities. It will not necessarily follow that the library, even in equipment, will compare with the other school departments. The furnishings, while handsome enough, are often designed more for appearance than use—hard wood bookcases with leaded glass doors, polished tables and chairs too few in number.

There may not be seating room for the pupils. We may do without a shelf-list, we may even worry along without a catalog, but the children must have seats in the library. If the floor space is adequate,

tables and chairs may be added at little expense by coöperating with the manual training department. This scheme has the added advantage of making the manual training boys feel a sense of ownership in the library.

This sort of simple reorganization work may be done in a few weeks. It takes time to develop catalogs, but in a short time with the aid of bulletins, pictures, a fern or flowers, the old library may take on an inviting appearance.

The book collection presents a series of problems. The librarian may be fortunate in inheriting a good reference collection, but the shelves are quite apt to be encumbered with numbers of old textbooks. She will be wise, however, to restrain her first impulse to discard on too large a scale until she has been over the course of study. Some books are alive, although they show no signs of life. The dingy old history of mathematics that she sends to the attic may prove to be the favorite reference book of one of the teachers for a particular point. The selection of books must be worked out according to the particular school and kind of library. If the high school library is entirely under control of the board of education it may be necessary to buy books, like other school supplies, at stated times. In this case the librarian must watch carefully the course of study and arrange her book orders accordingly, for in high school work a book that is a week behind the course of study is practically useless for the year. If the matter of book selection has been largely in the hands of principal and teachers it may be difficult for the librarian to gain control without causing friction. If she can win the confidence of the principal she may find him very glad to transfer this responsibility to her. Lists from the teachers should be encouraged, although it is often necessary to follow them with discrimination. If approached in the right way teachers are usually glad of suggestions, for they feel the librarian is in a better position than they to keep up with new books. High school collections, espe-

cially when the library has been running for several years, while strong in literature and history are quite often weak in art, science and applied science. While the most extended use of the library is apt to be by the English department, in the selection of books along the other lines the librarian has an opportunity to make these heads of departments and teachers understand that the library is not merely a place containing the encyclopedia and home reading books.

How to catalog these new books and re-catalog the old ones is indeed a serious problem. Boards of education will sometimes appropriate money for new books much more readily than for assistants to catalog them. The librarian who has visions of a dictionary catalog in her first year of reorganization is doomed to disappointment unless she meets unusual conditions. With no assistant, it is impossible to catalog with one hand while stamping admission slips and looking up references on famous shrines of history with the other. The admission slips must be taken care of, for, irksome as it is, the librarian cannot afford to deviate from school routine.

In an unorganized library, half the pupils who come in each period require definite assistance. Messengers are constantly coming from the class rooms: "Miss Jones would like to have the victrola and all the 'Midsummer night's dream' records." "Miss Smith wants that collection of poems she had last week." A point has come up in history or civics and the whole class waits while someone goes to the library to get the statistics necessary to settle it. The average period is forty-five minutes long, so it is easy to see that no cataloging can be done during the school day. The time after school is taken up with conferences with pupils and teachers, book ordering, and making lists, and allows very little time outside of these current things, for cataloging. In a small collection, new books in various stages of preparation may have to be pressed into service. With no protesting catalog department to consider, it is quite possible to do this al-

though it means more work for the librarian. In my library I have shelf-listed and cataloged the new books and a few of the old ones in small groups to meet particular needs; not an ideal arrangement by any means, but a possible one where the librarian is the "cook and the captain bold and the mate of the Nancy brig."

Another important matter that has to do with physical reorganization is that of keeping detailed records of work done. The librarian should keep a careful account of the activities of the library aside from the usual records of attendance and circulation. It is difficult to jot down items in busy periods and often the things seem too unimportant to mention, but work that the librarian takes as a matter of course is not so to outsiders. This sort of material, incorporated into reports is of great interest to the school authorities and helps to drive home to them the importance of the library.

Important as are these matters of physical reorganization and equipment, all the catalogs and lists in the world cannot take the place of the personal work of the librarian. She supplies the motive power without which the other things would be lifeless. In no department of library service is the personality of the librarian of more importance than in school work. If the library has been allowed to sink into insignificance in the eyes of the faculty and students, the librarian must throw all the weight of her experience, training, tact and enthusiasm to restore the library to its proper place. The tie between library and classroom should be as close as possible. The librarian must be patient if the teachers do not get her point of view immediately. The pre-formed pathways in the minds of the teachers, worn in by years of experience with the old library, are not to be easily broken down. While avoiding anything that suggests interference the librarian can make the teachers feel her intelligent and lively interest in their work and they will respond with increased interest in the library. Of course there is

considerable apathy with regard to the library to be overcome with the great body of teachers, but once progress is made with a few, the library idea soon spreads. Many of our staunchest supporters are teachers. One teacher actually asked me if I considered the high school library a worth while thing to which to devote my time. This attitude is largely due to misunderstanding of library aims and methods. To many people outside the teaching profession, library work means clerical work. Sometimes the teacher is blamed for lack of interest when she is really suffering from lack of time. The modern teacher is a very busy person. The librarian must take the library to the teacher, if it is only across the hall.

Increasing the motive power of the library with the pupils presents a new set of problems. The new librarian in her anxiety to increase the use of the library and to welcome the boys and girls cannot afford to slight the matter of discipline. While avoiding the sometimes rigid atmosphere of the study hall and the somewhat formal spirit of the classroom, pupils should be made to understand that the library is theirs for serious work and quiet enjoyment, but not a place in which to spend a period visiting with chums. The noisy, talkative pupils, troublesome though they are, often are uneasy because they are not interested in what they are doing. If the librarian can gain a point of contact through the right book early in the year the discipline problem disappears. She will sometimes be surprised to learn that some of her most quiet interested readers have unenviable reputations with the study hall teachers. Of course in a large school there are always those who construe liberty into license and who will be disorderly in spite of interesting magazines, attractive additions and the best efforts of the librarian. With such as these the librarian has nothing to lose and everything to gain by insisting upon proper order.

Training the pupils in the use of books and library tools is a field in which large

contributions to the general cause of education can be made. We all feel that no branch of school work is more important than the development of this book-using skill, but our particular task is to bring teachers and school authorities to this point of view. In order to make a beginning with this work the librarian may have to beg the time from a library-wise teacher of English but she should work steadily until a course in the use of the library becomes a regular part of the curriculum. If the librarian is in close touch with the public library she can cooperate with the children's department, so the transition from the instruction given in the grades to the more advanced high school work can be made easily and naturally. Some librarians prefer to carry on the lessons in the classroom, believing that it gives the work more prestige as a regular curriculum study. This is often necessary where classes are large and the library is small and uncataloged. In my library the work was done in this way illustrated with lantern slides of the various forms of cards,

and the children, made visual-minded by many moving pictures, responded readily.

Each problem as it presents itself seems more important and interesting than the one before. The librarian who in her organization dilemma spends most of her time the first year in this intensive work with pupils and teachers rather than in physical upbuilding of the library, has made a wise choice. I have no desire to disparage cataloging. No one appreciates a catalog more than one who has had to do without one after several years' experience in an excellent library, but I do feel that if the library is to have a new status in the school it must lose no time in getting hold of its public. The pupils are there but four short years at most and every bit of time is precious.

While we earnestly desire to see our libraries good practical working laboratories, we want them to be much more than that. The librarian who takes time from the personal work for anything else of whatever importance may lose ground she can never regain.

## WORK ACCOMPLISHED BY THE HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY SCRAPBOOKS

By MARY E. HALL, *Librarian, Girls' High School, Brooklyn, N. Y.*

At the close of its first year of service, the loan collection of high school library scrapbooks has fully justified the time, labor and expense of its preparation. It has travelled east and west, north and south, everywhere giving a visible demonstration of what we mean by the "twentieth century high school library," with its possibilities as a dynamic force in the work of a modern high school. So great has been the demand for these scrapbooks that we feel the collection should be made much more comprehensive and more fully representative of the work of all the leading high schools in different sections of the country.

The collection had its origin in two high

school library scrapbooks prepared for the school library exhibit of the American Library Association at its meeting in Washington in 1914. These two scrapbooks, one illustrating the work of the Cleveland high school libraries and the other the work of the Girls' High School in Brooklyn, were found to be suggestive and helpful to high school librarians just beginning school library work and eager to know something of the methods in use in other libraries and the scope of their work. These scrapbooks travelled about the country during 1914 and 1915 and were in such demand that the question arose, "Why not secure similar scrapbooks from other progressive high school libraries and